

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, Port-au-Prince

102

DESP. NO.

September 17, 1956

DATE

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF :

5 For Dept. Use Only	ACTION ARA-4	DEPT. RMIR-2 041-6 P-1 GE-1 IO-4
	REC'D 9/19	OTHER CIA-7 USA-10 NAVY-3

SUBJECT: Navase Island.

The Embassy transmits for the information of the Department one copy of Optique for August 1956, nearly half of which consists of articles concerning the dispute between Haiti and the United States concerning ownership of Navase Island.

Optique is a cultural and literary magazine issued monthly by the publishers of Le Nouvelliste, one of the leading newspapers in Port-au-Prince.

The Navase question is discussed in three related articles covering pages 5 through 33. The tone is restrained and objective, remarkably so in view of the emotional fervor with which Haiti approaches the question. Perhaps one reason is that legislation has been introduced before the United States Congress which would acknowledge Haiti's title to the island.

The only lapse in restraint appears midway through page 8 where the following language appears: "Such are, in summary, the facts of this century-old quarrel concerning the Navase, between our powerful American neighbor whose so-called right is based on brutal dispossession and force, and our little country whose valid right is based on History, treaties, and the permanent doctrines of the Rights of Man."

The three related articles are:

1. "The Question of Navase" (an historical summary).

- Legislation introduced to recognize Haiti's title
- The Navase question in the past and in the present
- The legal bases of our rights to Navase
- The American pretensions (despite its title, this section remains objective)

2. "A Legal Key to Davy Jones' Locker" (a reprint of an article from Nation's Business for April 1947 which supports the Haitian point of view).

3. "Haitian Diplomacy on Trial Under Faustin I".

The Haitian arguments for possession of La Navase are essentially these:

CHAlexander:dd
REPORTER

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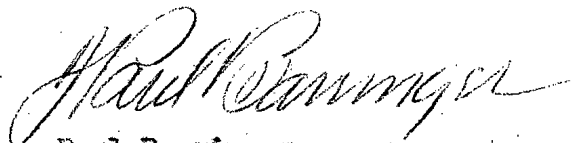
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THE ABOVE INSTRUCTION APPLIES TO THE DEPARTMENT ONLY

1. Initial occupation by the same aboriginal Indians as occupied Haiti.
2. Occupation by Spain and transfer of title to France in the Treaty of Ryswick (1697).
3. Inclusion in Haiti by the Haitian Constitution of 1806.
4. Occupation by Haitian fishermen and, from time to time, by a Haitian garrison.
5. Initial American recognition, at least by implication, that American occupation was temporary and for specific purposes, first exploitation of guano deposits, later erection of a lighthouse.

The American counterclaim is based on the "discovery" of the island in 1857 by one Peter Duncan under the terms of a law passed by the Congress the preceding year affording the protection of the Federal Government to American citizens discovering guano on unoccupied islands. Haiti finds it difficult to understand how an island discovered and named by Columbus, and consistently known by the same name ever since, could have been "discovered" by Mr. Duncan in 1857. They note that in claiming the island he used the old name and did not name it after himself.

For the Ambassador:



Paul Barringer
Counselor of Embassy

Enclosure:

Copy of Optique, August 1956.

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